

ORDINARY TIME – 17th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

RECOLLECTING OURSELVES FOR WORSHIP

Music (please use this time for quiet and reflection)

Gong [followed by silence]

Call to Worship

Hymn – 457

Opening Prayer

OUR HUMANNESS AND GOD'S GRACE

Call to Confession

Unison Prayer of Confession

Gracious God, I understand the idea that there is a deeper and expanded life that comes from pondering and exploring feeling states like anger and irritation. Feeling states such as these are like doorways into an interior world largely closed to me by the familiar and customary way I live. However, I am not generally drawn to pondering and exploring any feeling state because of the uneasiness that comes when I think about doing so. Help me understand that you are only asking me to feel whatever I already feel, and then to pay attention to whatever that is, and to be open to what comes from doing so. I want to make walking with you into something dramatic, when in reality walking with you is about attending to what is ordinary for me, and watching as it is changed into something more profound.

Personal Prayer of Confession in Silence

Assurance of Pardon

LISTENING FOR THE WORD OF GOD

Story for the Children

Scripture – Luke 15:1-10

Prompting

Silence and Reflection

RESPONDING TO THE WORD OF GOD

Hymn – 474

Announcements

Minute for Mission

Our Gifts and Offerings

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;

Praise Christ all creatures here below;

Praise Holy Spirit, Comforter;

One God, Triune, whom we adore. Amen.

The Prayers of the People and Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come,

your will be done,

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us in the time of trial

and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours  
now and forever. Amen.

GOING OUT – to serve, to journey, to live the word

Hymn – 320

Charge and Benediction

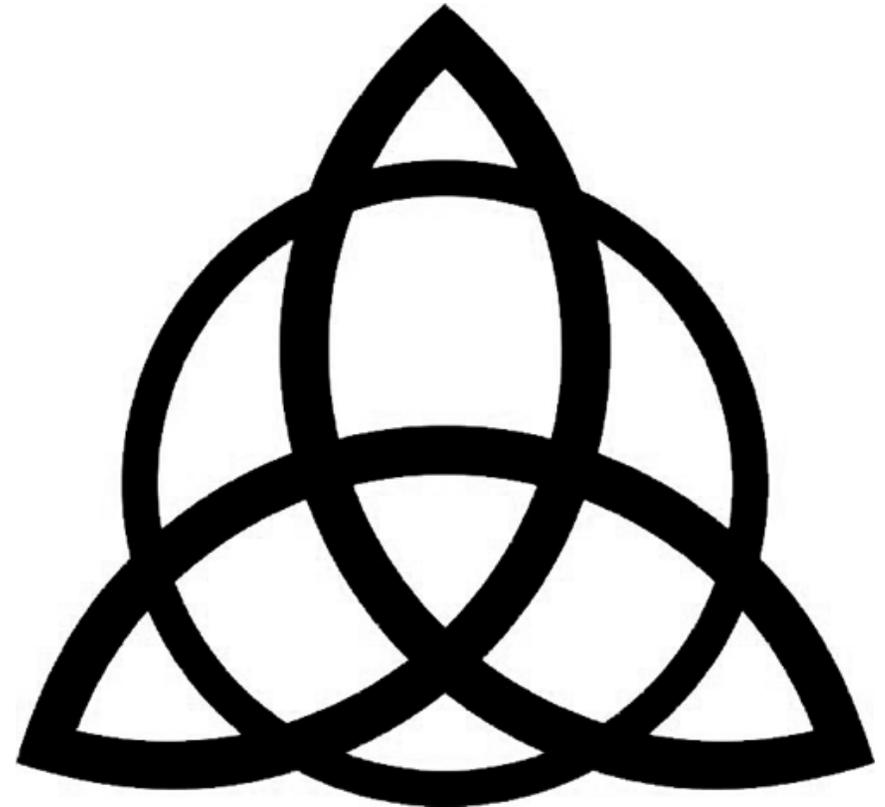
## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

TODAY	10:00	Worship
	11:00	Coffee and Fellowship
	11:20	Conversation
	12:00	Lunch Bunch
MONDAY	1:00	Centering Prayer, at church

Lectionary Readings from Cycle C for September 18, 2016  
Jeremiah 8:18—9:1; Psalm 79:1-9;  
1 Timothy 2:1-7; Luke 16:1-13.

FYI

Next Sunday we will share lunch. Please bring some food to share and plan to stay.



**This symbol is known as a “Triquetra.”  
It is a symbol for the Trinity.**

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### Ordinary Time – 17th Sunday after Pentecost (Luke 15:1-10)

I encourage us to remember that the prize in Christianity is enjoying the relationship with God as God unfolds our personal and communal lives. We live in a culture where heavy emphasis is placed on achievement and success, on setting and attaining goals and overcoming obstacles, on arriving. However, Christianity approaches life as a journey; the emphasis is on making the journey, and not on where we end up. There will always be things we cannot and do not achieve. There will be failures, goals we never reach, obstacles we cannot overcome, and places at which we do not arrive. All of which are used by God to introduce us to components of our life we do not visit, explore or use when we are busy achieving. What God discloses modifies our image and experience of the person we are, which changes our notion of who we are and what our life is about. There is satisfaction in achieving, which is not the same as the joy talked about in this text. Joy is something that can come to us even if we never achieve anything. Joy is the byproduct of participating in God's unfolding our life, the result of our paying attention to what we are experiencing [which is confession] and our learning to think about our experience in an effort to not evaluate it, but rather comprehend it and even appreciate it [which is repentance]. The insights that are brought to us on this journey, create a profound intimacy with ourselves, and yield a temperate "cheerfulness, a calm delight."

The different characters in this story are all found within us. The "tax collectors and sinners" would be the parts of our life that are considered less than desirable by the "Pharisees and scribes" who would be the parts of our life that work diligently to maintain the established culture of our personality and keep it stable. It is the tension between these two aspects of our life that I am highlighting, rather than the psychological or biblical names we give to the contestants. In line with their function, the Pharisees and scribes in us are what grumble about the work Christ does in us: "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them." The word "sinners" refers to those things about us we consider to have missed the mark of our established internal culture, and whose presence keeps us from having the prize of the life we want. If we

listen carefully to ourselves, we will hear us complain about these elements in our personality. The Greek word translated as "grumble" means "to complain throughout a crowd;" I think the word is referring to a widespread complaining within us. In English, "grumble" means "to complain in a surly manner; to mutter discontentedly." The grumbling we do can be found in the internal speaking we often hear, as well as in the words we actually speak, and also without words when we feel and/or become irritated and distressed over something about us constantly appearing which we dislike because it is inconvenient or embarrasses us. The Greek word translated as "welcome" is the verb "to admit (to intercourse, hospitality, credence or endurance)," and by implication "to await (with confidence and patience)." "Welcoming" is what Christ does within us. Christ admits "sinners" into our life, the things about us which the Pharisees in us do not want to interact with, or be hospitable toward, or give credence to. Christ does this as a way to help the "sinners" endure. And, Christ awaits confidently and patiently with us, helping us to own the "sinners" as parts of us.

In this text Christ tells two stories about people who lost something, went in search of what was lost, found it, and then celebrated the finding. When we internalize these stories we encounter a difficulty. It is easy to look for something objective which is lost because we know what it is and can notice it is missing. This is not the case internally and subjectively. When something internal is lost to us, by its being lost we do not know what it is let alone that it is missing, and therefore we do not know to look for it in the first place, or even what to look for. So, how do we know something internal has been lost? The answer is: pay attention to our repeated grumbling and complaining, our ongoing discontent. The repeated grumbling tells us that something about us is knocking on the door of our awareness and seeks to be admitted to consciousness. The grumbling is both the way we defend against something we do not want to encounter, and is also the doorway to the discovery of what that is. So, how do we know what has been lost? Actually, we need to go looking for what has been lost. And we do the looking with the confidence that Christ continuously and

patiently admits, in the sense of discloses, what has been lost, which allows it to endure until we are able to see it, own it and possess it.

Finding what has been lost requires what is translated into English as “repentance.” The Greek word means: “to think differently or afterwards, i.e. reconsider.” The root of this word is a preposition meaning “accompaniment,” plus a verb meaning “to exercise the mind [observe], i.e. [figuratively] to comprehend, heed.” The idea in this word is: we use our minds to observe, but also make an effort to comprehend what we observe, by paying attention and listening in ways that are not customary for us, as we consider subjects that are not customary for us. Customarily, we approach what enters our awareness by evaluating it in terms of whether or not it meets the criteria we inherited for what is acceptable and valid. Because of this approach, many subjects do not stay in consciousness very long because they do not meet the criteria. Repentance is thinking more openly. And thinking openly is how we find something that is lost. When we do not actually know what we are looking for, when all we have is the grumbling, we sit with the grumbling, pay attention to it, and ponder where it takes us. Repentance means to reconsider our habitual evaluating and to exercise our minds by thinking differently about evaluating, considering being more welcoming and curious about our own interior, and considering subjects we can see no value in at the moment. Repentance would involve having an openness to being informed about things being true of us which we normally would dismiss. The assumption is that ours is not the only intelligence at work in our interior. Christ is also at work, constantly introducing us to our own life, and continuously expanding our understanding of the person we are. The part we play in this is: we repent—we “think differently or afterwards, i.e. reconsider,” what we have taken for granted about ourselves in the past.

Repentance often involves us in the feeling of “compunction,” a word which means “a strong uneasiness caused by a sense of guilt.” Thinking differently will often arouse guilt because thinking differently heightens the possibility of considering things that are not deemed acceptable and valid. However, thinking differently by

considering things that are not considered acceptable and valid brings its own reward, what is referred to in the text as “joy.” The word translated as “joy” means “cheerfulness, i.e. calm delight.” “Cheerfulness and calm delight” are what come to us as “thinking differently” yields another and additional insights into the reality of our own interior. Even if we have been practicing the art of repentance for a long time and our awareness of our self is largely equitable and fair [the meaning of “righteous], the same calm delight comes each time repentance bears fruit. Perhaps this is the way we would experience what is written in verses 6 and 9: “Rejoice with me, for I have found...that [which] was lost.”

[Jim Robie, 9-9-16, 17<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost in Cycle C, Luke 15:1-10]